

An Integrated Approach to Resolving Urban Wildlife Conflicts

By Using Public Education and Community Involvement

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Abstract (revised)

The urban oasis of the greater Phoenix area, with its abundant resources, makes life easier for wildlife and also allows more animals to exist in smaller areas. Because wildlife is living in close proximity to humans, conflicts are inevitable. A large part of these conflicts can be related to human activities such as active or inadvertent feeding, and indifference or tolerance that leads to habituation. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) has adopted an Integrated Management Approach (IMA) for coexistence with wildlife in the urban setting. "Coexistence" is a dynamic process; it takes effort, ranging from increasing one's knowledge, to being responsible citizens and assisting with resolution. The mission of the IMA is for AGFD and the community to share the responsibility for organizing public awareness, education, communication, and coordination for management of urban wildlife and conflict issues. The shared responsibility also includes altering human behavior that could potentially lead to human-wildlife conflicts. AGFD provides educational materials to the community through homeowner's associations, municipalities, or other active community groups. These groups or entities are then responsible for disseminating this information by using a variety of resources to get everyone "on the same page" with wildlife issues. AGFD manages escalating conflicts by providing support, solutions, and/or lethal removal of wildlife that poses a threat to public safety. Four large communities in the Phoenix metropolitan area have adopted this approach and created their own individual Integrated Management Plans. Although the IMA is in its infancy, early reports indicate the effort is a success that is leading to other communities wanting to implement their own plans.

BACKGROUND

Wildlife problems usually result from factors under human control...

Indifference/Tolerance = Wildlife loses fear of humans

Active/Inadvertent Feeding = Habituation

Removal of "problem animals" = *Short-term* Solution

Need for *Long-term* Solutions arise:

- Education
- Community Support
- Active participation



Integrated Management Approach—Coordination and Communication between AGFD and the Community to provide *Long-term* Solutions for living with Urban Wildlife. Since there is not one single technique to manage urban wildlife and its array of issues, a comprehensive IMA is the best management tool.

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

AGFD:

- Provide Educational Materials
- Conflict Resolution and Support
- Lethal Removal of Wildlife

(when human safety is the issue)

Both:

- Provide same Clear/Concise Message
- Coordination and Communication

Community:

- Dissemination of Educational Materials
- Responsible for Wildlife Habitats and Human Behaviors that could lead to Human-Wildlife Conflicts
- Don't Feed Wildlife, Reduce Attractants
- Discourage Wildlife from becoming comfortable in backyards/neighborhoods



MISSION: Organize an Education, Communication and Coordination System for Management of Urban Wildlife and Conflict Issues

MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC

Coexistence is a dynamic process; it requires:

- Increased knowledge
- Responsible Citizens
- Assistance with Resolution
- Cooperation and Support
- Everyone on the "Same Page!"



DISCUSSION:

Integrated Management Approach

- New tool for Managing Urban Wildlife and Conflicts
- Positive Results from 4 Large Communities in NW Valley
- Others Communities encouraged by early results and are in discussion



Once people realize their lifestyle and habits directly relate to how wildlife behave, a common ground can be reached and *coexistence* will become a reality.